

A
CRITIQUE ON THE CRITICISMS
OF
THE SIMPLICITY OF LIFE

RALPH RICHARDSON, M.A., M.D.

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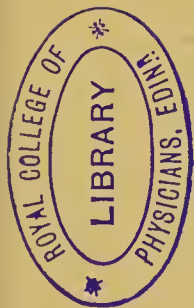
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A CRITIQUE
ON THE
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OF THE
SIMPLICITY OF LIFE

By
RALPH RICHARDSON, M.D.,
M.A., T.C. DUBLIN.

FELLOW OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF EDINBURGH.



"Know well each former author's works and words,
"Without all this at once before your eyes,
"Cavil you may but scarcely criticise."

LONDON
H. K. LEWIS, 136 GOWER STREET
1882

"I took all the pains I could to avoid abstruse, difficult and singular modes of explication, and
"studied to make use of such as were obvious, plain, and most common,"—*Seats and Causes of
Diseases* by J. B. Morgani, translated by Ben. Alexander, 1769. Pref. p. 25.

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“O felicissimum qui metam proxime attigerit.”

ERRATA.

For nisi pruis p. 10 bottom line, *read* nisi prius.

For maximum p. 24 line 13, *read* maxim.

A CRITIQUE ON THE CRITICISMS
OF
THE SIMPLICITY OF LIFE.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE following Critique on the Criticisms of the "Simplicity of Life" was intended as a preface to my second edition, published three years ago and which I have designated the "Nature of Life."

Introductory
Remarks.
Reviewers.

This second edition has not been noticed by the Reviewers, hence these remarks refer only to my first.

It is often said that suggestions from friendly Reviewers are of great service to an author, yet honest though adverse criticisms are of far greater value.

The author trusts he has, in his second edition shown his appreciation of their animadversions by improving the arrangement of his materials and by making his language more clear.

As to the appropriateness of drawing attention to Fletcher's doctrines, it must have occurred to every one

J. Fletcher.

Introductory
Remarks.

who reads current medical works that the theories of their authors are markedly devoid of simplicity and completeness.

Writers of great authority are not ashamed to inculcate a chemical theory for one disease, a vital theory for another, a neurotic theory for a third and even a mechanical theory for some other disorder.

In every other science the laws laid down for any one portion of it apply equally to every other.

An Astronomer does not explain the motion of the Planets by one hypothesis and that of their satellites by another; but he applies the same law to the movements of the largest masses in the Universe, and to the least portion of the comparatively small globe which we inhabit, "the law which moulds a planet, rounds a tear."

J. Fletcher.

In his Pathology Fletcher, enlarging upon John Brown's doctrines, explained the nature of every disease to which man is liable by a law as simple and universal as that of Gravitation.

But for his untimely death his doctrines would have met with universal acceptance.

If in "The Nature of Life" I have done justice to his

theories they may perhaps be adopted, as a whole, by great authorities, just as so many of his doctrines were formerly appropriated, and without reference or acknowledgment.

Introductory
Remarks.

Review of the Edinburgh Medical Journal.

February, 1874.

THE SIMPLICITY OF LIFE.

By RALPH RICHARDSON, M.A.

London: H. K. Lewis, 1873.

“This is an inviting small quarto, neatly printed on
“good paper, and elegantly bound. We have read it
“with care, and a desire to do it every justice; but it
“took us some time to obtain a glimpse of the author’s

Edin. Medical
Journal.

Edin. Med.
Journal.

“aim, and that glimpse was unsatisfying. He quotes, in
“an early note, some sensible observations by Dr. L.
“Beale and the late Dr. John Fletcher, an eminent
“teacher in the Edinburgh Extra-mural School, on the
“extreme importance of clearness of definition, and of
“accuracy and uniformity in the use of terms, in all
“philosophical inquiries. Having, we confess, a great
“belief and confidence in such modes of procedure, we
“entered on the task of perusal with expectation and
“hopefulness. But, alas! our author teaches more by
“precept than by example, and does not attain, we fear,
“to his own *beau idéal* in scientific disquisition. What
“he means by the *Simplicity of Life* we have failed to
“discover; for, after many references to previous
“writers, and a considerable display of learning—the
“greater part of it, however, gathered from a few years
“before and after 1830—we are led up to the following
“conclusion, which appears to leave the subject of life,
“instead of simpler, a little more complicated than be-
“fore:—‘The notion of life to be deduced from what
“has preceded is, that it consists in the sum of the
“characteristic actions of organized beings, performed in
“virtue of a specific susceptibility acted on by specific

“stimuli; and as this susceptibility and these stimuli,
“when natural, may be regarded respectively as the
“*predisposing* and *exciting* causes, as it were, and the ac-
“tions resulting from them as the *proximate* cause of
“health, so it is of some change in the first that every
“predisposing cause, of some change in the second that
“every exciting cause, and of some change in the last,
“that every proximate cause severally consist.’”

Edin. Med.
Journal.

“We suppose that, when all the susceptibilities cease
“to be acted on by the stimuli, life is at an end and
“death occurs. But are we any the wiser? It humbly
“seems to us that the title of the book is not in keeping
“with the contents, and that our author has added no-
“thing to our knowledge of a subject which has baffled
“all the great thinkers of the world from Plato down-
“wards.”

This review is honest and good-natured.

Comment.

It is the former in as much as it does not advise its readers to waste their time and money on an useless book, and it is good natured in that it gives the author all the credit to which he is fairly entitled, as a faithful expositor of John Fletcher's theories, and a careful compiler of facts and of the opinions of many of the best writers on the subject of his essay.

Author's Re-
view.

The Reviewer might not unfairly have said :—"That
"as he who rides merely for his amusement can never
"be said to have lost his road, so he who writes for his
"amusement can hardly be accused of missing his mark."

"We have no doubt the compilation of this little
"book has given the author great pleasure—we
"wish we could say the same for ourselves in its
"perusal—but should the author again empty his note
"book upon the heads of a much enduring medical pub-
"lic we trust that out of compassion to the Critic he
"will give us a preface and a table of contents, so that
"we may know the scope of his work and the object of
"its composition."

"This supposing that the author has any intelligible
"object. The truth may be that like a humble bee he
"cannot help bumping at his work and having the
"cacoethes scribendi has sent his manuscript to his pub-
"lishers."

This criticism, by the author, is at the service of any
future Reviewer, who being in an amiable but indolent
state of mind, wishes to convey an opinion, similar to
that of the *Edinburgh Medical Journal*.

The author, however, still considers that John Brown's

doctrines form the only foundation for a consistent and rational pathology.

Author's Review.

From the Westminster Review.

April, 1874.

THE SIMPLICITY OF LIFE.

By RALPH RICHARDSON, M.A.

London : H. K. Lewis, 1873.

“The title of this book is very inaccurate, to say the least of it. Its contents are extracts from Fletcher’s Physiology, and from certain other writings of his compiled by Dr. Richardson.

Westminster Review.

“By whomsoever written, it is one of those endless

Westminster
Review.

“scholastic discussions, so dear to our friends ayond the
“border, which never do lead to anything, never
“have led to anything, and probably never will.”

Comment.

It is obvious that the Reviewer does not perceive the subject of this treatise to be but another side of the doctrine so eloquently advocated by Professor Huxley in his lectures “on the Physical Basis of Life” which delivered to a mixed assembly, formed one of a series of popular discourses for sunday evenings.

Huxley.

The Author in this second edition has endeavoured to render the scope of his treatise more obvious, and in the Note on John Brown’s theories has tried to explain these opinions in as clear a manner as Professor Huxley has done, the other side of the argument.

Huxley.

He may not have succeeded so well as the popular professor who has the gift of placing his views so plausibly before his audience as to obtain their immediate assent. If time, however, be taken to examine Professor Huxley’s arguments, the want of consequence between premises and conclusion becomes sufficiently obvious.

Westminster
Review.

The Reviewer then continues:—“But the disputants
“are as voluble and as acrimonious as such disputants
“were three hundred years ago and always will be, and

“thus they justify their claim to the name of philosophers κατ’ ἐξοχην.”*

Westminster
Review.

“We have but glanced through the present treatise so we have no right to review it, of one thing only we are sure; that it was scarcely kind to poor Fletcher to prove his want of “vitality,” by calling him again “into action, only again to die, and be forgotten.”

As this impugns the good of this work, it may be allowable for the author, at some length, to give reasons for its publication.

Comment.

Had this Reviewer been familiar with the literature of the last half century he would have known that many of Dr. John Fletcher’s theories had since his day, been brought forward in isolated forms, with a claim of originality.

This alone, would entitle his works and opinions to a republication.

Thus to mention only a few instances Dr. Haldane writing in 1865 on the Modern Practice of Medicine

Haldane.

* This must in great measure be granted, but directness in writing is no proof of bitterness of feeling, or *per se* of a want of

Comment.

Westminster
Review.
Comment.

remarks. "A fundamental and most important principle of pathology has only *lately* been clearly recognised; it is this, that diseases are not new and independent entities, but that they are perversions of "normal or physiological processes." and this is further enlarged upon for some pages, though not with the conciseness of John Brown in 1780, nor the clearness of Fletcher in 1836

Reith.

Thus, again, Dr. Archibald Reith, of Aberdeen in the Edinburgh Medical Journal for 1868, after insisting upon the twofold action of medicines and making a diagram in illustration, thus concludes his third article:—"Note—There is nothing new under the sun. The twofold action of medicines which I have advocated, was "admitted long ago by the late Dr. John Fletcher of "Edinburgh. OF COURSE he knew little of the sympa-

kindly good will. It is troublesome to embellish argumentative language with forms of politeness. The more earnest expression gives the more clear idea of the writers meaning. It may fairly be hoped that the "acrimonious disputants" entertain no more personal animosity than barristers arguing at *nisi pruis*.

“thetic system but in page 490—1 of his work on General
 “Pathology, I find similar ideas entertained regarding
 “the action of medicines, to those which I have endeav-
 “oured to illustrate. His longitudinal line is almost
 “identical in principle with my horizontal one.”

Westminster
 Review.
 Comment.

Had Dr. Reith pursued his studies as far as Fletcher's Physiology he would have found, two hundred and sixty pages devoted to the properties and functions of the Ganglionic Nerves, and it is questionable whether, since his time, any greater knowledge on this subject has been shown, unless, indeed, the invention of new names for this system, such as vaso-motor or allotrophic be considered an evidence of learning.

Again Dr. T. Laycock of Edinburgh in his “*Medical Observations and Research*,” page 181, “Man like the
 “earth he inhabits, has his harmonious yet subordinate
 “position in creation. He is certainly a leading link in
 “the infinite scheme of life, yet he is but a link. This is
 “the great truth of human physiology. Expressed more
 “technically, we may say, that the *primary or fundamental*
 “*principles* of life is the unity in structure and function
 “of organisms both in time and space. The principle
 “thus announced will *doubtless be severely questioned*, and

Laycock.

Westminster
Review.
Comment.

“its truth *controverted* but it will finally be almost universally adopted.”

This is not asserted to be a new doctrine but the Professor's expectation of his theory being controverted, is hardly consistent with the knowledge that it was most clearly and conclusively taught from 1827 to 1837 in the same city of Edinburgh and by Geoffroy St. Hilaire and De Blainville, the former in 1796, and the latter in 1830 in the University of Paris.

Watson.

Again Sir Thomas Watson is praised by the *Medical Times* of Jan. 6, 1872 for having explained the efficacy of bleeding in congestion of the veins and right heart and for his quoting Dr. Markham as “the first to rectify the vague notions that formerly prevailed on the subject.” All this is explained much more simply and clearly in Fletcher's *Physiology*, part ii, p. 126 and in his *Pathology* p. 483, and in John Mackintosh's *Practice of Physic*, Vol. I., p. 165 of 3rd edit., of 1832.*

Raymund
Minderer.

* A claim of originality usually implies ignorance of history. Raymund Minderer at page 55 of his *Medicina Militaris*, published in 1686 says—“yet may Venæ-section be sometimes, upon good

In the *Brit. Med. Chi. Rev.* for Jan. 1874 is a treatise 35 pages long by Dr. Lauder Lindsay to show that animals are subject to diseases similar to those of man

Westminster
Review.
Lauder
Lindsay.

Had Dr. Lindsay studied Fletcher, he would not have wasted so much time and print on a self-evident proposition.

Comment.

For if Man and Animals are organised upon one type as explained by Geoffroy St. Hilaire—(1796) If the properties of organized tissues, depend upon their organic structure (Fletcher) or in other words upon the “nature and disposition of their component molecules” (Huxley), if again every organism differs only in degree from every other, if these organisms are all acted upon by the same natural forces, it follows that the actions of all animated beings must be similar in kind, as similar in truth, as is their organic structure.

Organic struc-
ture.

“consideration used in Pleurisie, provided it be done at the very
“beginning, and the patient be strong and full of blood. Yet
“this is not to lessen the quantity of blood, but only to give it
“vent, but before bleeding the patient is to take a diaphoretic
“mixture.”

Westminster
Review.
Comment.

If again the actions of these organisms in an ordinary condition is called health and in an extraordinary condition called disease—it follows that all animated beings must be liable to similar diseases.

Lauder
Lindsay.

Dr. Lauder Lindsay need not have stopped at animals but might have extended his view even to the vegetable kingdom* as mentioned in the *Lancet* Nov 9. 1867, p. 589.

Fletcher.

That the matter of contagion acts in a similar manner on all organised creatures, follows equally from this hypothesis—as we know it does from experience—the effect of such matter of contagion however differing according to the peculiar susceptibilities of the receptive organisms.

This susceptibility variously called predisposition, peculiarity of constitution, or specific irritability, differing

* In Fletcher's *Pathology* numerous examples are given of animals being affected with diseases similar to those of man.

Recorded instances of such facts from Homer, Hippocrates, Rufus Didymus, Aristarchus, Silius Italicus, Livy, and Ovid are quoted by Fleming and Melroy on animal plagues in 1869.

in each case with the varying organic structure of every such animated being. This subject will be further enlarged upon when contagious matter and infectious malaria come to be discussed in future chapters.

Westminster
Review.
Comment.

As another instance of the assumption of Fletcher's doctrines, the younger Darwin writes many lengthy chapters to prove that the lower animals have feelings, affections and mental qualities similar to those of man and therefore "men and toads" must have had a common ancestor.

Darwin.

The former proposition requires no proof, but the latter is a non-sequiteer. This long exposition of individual instances is mere waste of time and learning. If it be granted that the brain of man and of animals is formed on the same type differing only in degree, and if thought be the function of the brain; it follows, that, this function will differ in all animals in degree, but not in kind—and just in proportion as their brains are developed. This proposition is conclusively proved in the chapter "on the immediate seat of Thought" in Fletcher's *Physiology* part 3.*

Darwin.

* This truth as regards man was recognised two hundred years Paul Barbette.

Westminster
Review.
Comment.

Another quotation will be here offered to show the Vitality of Fletcher and the neglect of his writings. The following is a verbatim reprint from the *Brit. Med. Jour.*, May 30th 1874.

ON THE REFLEX FUNCTION OF THE BRAIN: A CORRECTION OF DATES.

By T. LAYCOCK, M.D.

Professor of the Practice of Medicine, in the University of Edinburgh.

Laycock.

“The then exceeding difficulty of these inquiries cannot be appreciated by the present generation of physi-

ago—“it has been known”—says Paul Barbette “that part of the brain has been taken forth and the Life preserved though the Understanding was lost.”

Paul Barbette, M.D., of Amsterdam, works of, p. 149 of 4th edit. of 1687.

“cians and physiologists. Not only was it universally held that the mind or consciousness was the cause of all mental states, but at that date, Dr. Carpenter, together with Alison, Müller, Reid, and others, strongly maintained that sensation was a cause of certain movements —*e.g.*, that pain caused the cries and writhings significant of pain. On the other hand, Marshall Hall had fixed the limit in the encephalon of his true spinal system to be at the tubercula quadrigemina; all above (he held) was the seat of the “soul,” and beyond the range of physiological research.”

Westminster
Review.
Laycock.

The author studied in Edinburgh from 1829 to 1835 and never heard of such an hypothesis.

Comment.

He was taught that Thought was the function of the brain; and that mind and consciousness, were modes of Thought; or different words to signify modifications of the act of thinking. Also that sensation excited thought as irritation excites sensation. *Irritatio est perceptio, sensatio est perceptio perceptionis* (Glisson)* was considered axiomatic.

* *De Ventriculo et Intestinis*, 1678, p. 239.

Westminster
Review.
Comment.

Sensation was considered not a "cause of movements" but of thought "In intellectu nihil est, quod non prius fuerat in sensu," was taught in Edinburgh notwithstanding the lapse of two thousand years since its promulgation.

Numerous examples are given by Fletcher of the independence of Irritation, Sensation and Thought, although the two first lead up to the third—as explained by Locke.

In Fletcher's *Rudiments of Physiology*, part 3 and p. 8, published in 1837 the whole subject is clearly explained. Sensation is described as the action of the senses, and Thought that of the brain and Perception is that form of thought by which a sensation is perceived in the mind.

The following extract from the *Medical Press and Circular* refers to the claim of Dr. Fletcher to another doctrine lately brought forward as a novelty, and also to the morality, of the Editor of one of the Medical Periodicals.

The Medical Press and Circular.

August 5th, 1874.

ON THE THEORY OF COUNTER-IRRITATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MEDICAL PRESS AND CIRCULAR.

Dr. John
Drysdale.

SIR,

In an otherwise excellent paper on this subject in the *Practitioner* for March, 1874, Dr. James Ross advances the theory that counter-irritants act beneficially, not by drawing away any diseased influences from the affected part, nor as antiphlogistics, in the ordinary sense of the word, but always by conveying a stimulus to the diseased part, either by sympathy or contiguity. As the only surviving editor of Dr. Fletcher's works, will you allow me to call attention to the fact that this is substantially the same *rationale* of the action of these agents as was always taught by Dr. Fletcher in his class,

Medical Press
and Circular.
Dr. J. Ross.

Dr. J. Ross.
Practitioner.

and is given in his *Elements of Pathology*, 1842, as the following extracts will show :—

“It is absurd, then, to continue to talk of counter-
“irritation in the sense, at least, in which the word is
“generally used, to signify the withdrawing an irritation
“from an inflamed part by exciting an irritation in
“another. There is no known law in the economy
“which justifies us in supposing that such is ever the case,
“and if it were, the remedy would infallibly increase, in
“stead of alleviating a disease consisting already in a state
“of minor irritation. But independently of all theory on
“the subject, what are the conclusions to be drawn from
“every-day experience? When the seat of the inflam-
“mation is one to which we can immediately apply our
“medicines, as in cynanche tonsillaris, gonorrhœa, oph-
“thalmia, and skin diseases, are the most effective gar-
“gles, injections, collyria, &c., usually such as excite or
“such as depress? and are the other direct remedies to
“which we have recourse with the greatest benefit in
“deep-seated inflammations, such as heat, electricity,
“acupuncture &c., of a stimulant or sedative character?
“Now, is it not absurd, when we see that *direct* remedies
“of inflammation are always such as to communicate,

“not withdraw irritation, to continue to *presume* that in-
“*direct* remedies, or reputed revulsives, such as emetics,
“purgatives, diuretics, errhines, sialogogues, diaphore-
“tics, and in particular epispastics, are such as to with-
“draw, not communicate it? They all obviously act in
“the same way, and the effect of each class of revulsives
“in bringing the action of the dilated capillaries of each
“organ up to the line of health will of course be great
“or inconsiderable in proportion as the specific charac-
“ter of the new irritation is well or ill-adapted to the
“specific irritability of these vessels, and as the sym-
“pathy which subsists between the organ to which the
“revulsive is applied and the seat of the primary irrita-
“tion is intimate or the reverse.”

Dr. J. Ross.

I do not in the least mean to make a charge of plagiarism against Dr. Ross, who I have no doubt, was quite unaware of having been preceded by Fletcher. But in justice to the memory of the latter, I bring this forward now, and I endeavoured to do so in the *Practitioner*, to which a very short article with the above and another extract were sent immediately after the appearance of Dr. Ross's paper. The editor of that periodical has, however, refused to insert it, for what reason I do

Practitioner.

Practitioner.

not know ; but it is to be hoped he will be able to justify his refusal, as I find since, that he has also claimed the priority of the above theory when reviewing a former work by Dr. Ross.

Drysdale.

I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,

JOHN DRYSDALE, M.D.

Liverpool.

Upon the cause of coagulation of the blood an old doctrine has been reproduced which was taught by Dr. J. Fletcher half a century ago, although without any claim to originality.

Burdon Sanderson.

In the *Brit. Med. Journal* for Jan. 12th, 1872 there is a lecture of Dr. J. Burdon Sanderson from which the following extract is taken :—

“Every student is familiar with the inconvenient
“words fibrinogen and fibrinoplastin, by which Profes-
“sor Schmidt of Dorpat has designated what he calls
“the fibrin factors, and is able to tell you that they are
“so designated because together they are supposed,
“according to what he pleases to call the newest views,
“to make fibrin. Your student would further tell you

“if asked, that there is no fibrin in the circulating blood,
 “that the fibrin of the clot is represented by the fibrino-
 “plastin and fibrinogen of the liquor sanguinis; but
 “that, somehow or other, although both of these factors
 “are present, no coagulation occurs so long as the blood
 “is contained in the vascular system.”

With the exception of the words fibrinogen and fibrinoplastin this is merely the teaching of Edinburgh from 1826 to 1836, and to be found in Fletcher's *Rudiments of Physiology*, 1837, part i. p. 114, and subsequently in his posthumous work on Pathology edited by Drs. Drysdale and Russell, 1842.

Dr. Sanderson adds, “so that the immediate cause of
 “the coagulation of the blood appears to be the with-
 “drawal from it of the influence naturally exercised
 “upon it by the living vessels;” which Dr. Fletcher
 disproves by anticipation—by the remark that where
 the blood becomes stagnant and therefore retains its
 identity sufficiently long, the fibrin forms, and neces-
 sarily coagulates, whether it be within or without the
 blood vessels—as in aneurism, ecchymosis, or ligatured
 arteries, etc.

This may suffice to show to any reasonable critic the Comment.

Westminster
Review.

vitality of Dr. John Fletcher, but were there any advantage, pages might be written to show his claim to the authorship of numerous recent so-called discoveries, but this would be to anticipate future chapters of his Pathology.

Lewins.

To quote Dr. Robert Lewins in the preface to Dr. Fletcher's posthumous work:—"Our author's claim to professional distinction may safely be founded upon his work on Physiology alone. But besides it there are many doctrines which have been foisted on the world by certain literary jackdaws who have plumed themselves with his feathers, and published opinions, if not books, as their own, for which, had the maximum 'suum cuique' been observed, Dr. Fletcher ought to have had the credit."

Fletcher.

The author must mention one more instance of Dr. Fletcher's insight into the nature of disease, as a proof of his vitality.

There must be a few of his old pupils left who "ground" with him at the time of the reform riots, who may remember his lecture on cholera, which before this time had never appeared in Europe. How he explained that epidemics do not increase the ordinary

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Review.

mortality, if a space of three years be calculated, and how the first invasion of an epidemic is more fatal than any succeeding one. Then how he prophesied that the coming cholera would travel in a definite track.* How it would advance in a north west direction till checked by cold, and then by south west, and would enter England on the east coast, and proceed on to America. How it would present certain symptoms, and be treated by brandy and opium, and how the mortality would be fifty per cent., and how the only chance for the patient would be to keep out of the way of the doctor.

Cholera.

The cholera came as he prophesied, presented the symptoms he mentioned, and was treated as he expected with brandy and opium, and the only places where the mortality was at all moderate were, the Homœopathic hospital in Vienna, the Cold-bath Fields' prison, and the wild districts of Russia, where devoid of doctors, the natives treated their sick relatives with hot boiled milk.

* "It is the observation of Pliny that pestilence always travels "from the southern parts of the world to the western." Quoted by Dr. Richard Mead Works, p. 243 of edition of 1762.

Westminster
Review.
Cholera.

Stevens.

Ship.
Barbadoes.

In the Homœopathic Hospital at Vienna the treatment, if not curative, was harmless.* In the Cold-bath Fields' prison, Dr. William Stevens gave his patients common salt and soda with cold water or weak broth.† Dr. W. Stevens mentions the case of the ship "Barbadoes" Capt. Lee, from the Cove of Cork to Canada in 1832. She carried one hundred and forty emigrants, all of whom and the crew were attacked with cholera. The first three cases were treated with opium and brandy, and all died;—afterwards having no more opium, the captain gave the only other medicine he possessed—a table-spoonful of Epsom salts—and all these cases recovered.

In 1832 there was not a man of any repute who did not administer opium and brandy.

* The mortality was so much less in the Homœopathic than in the regular hospitals, that the Emperor conferred a charter on the homœopathic physicians to practice their art in every part of his dominions.

† *Observations on the Nature and Treatment of Asiatic Cholera*, by W. Stevens, M.D., D.C.L. Oxon., London, 1853.

After forty years of empirical treatment, Niemeyer advocates the administration of small doses of calomel and ice on the tongue, and cold pack to the whole body* and agrees with Surgeon-Major Robert Pringle† and Augustus P. Hall, Surgeon R.A.‡ that nothing can be worse than opium and alcoholic stimulants, or, in truth, than the treatment of the most eminent in the profession of fifty years ago.

Westminster
Review.
Cholera.
Niemeyer.

Pringle.

A. P. Hall.

On the present treatment, of how many diseases the same remark may be made half a century hence it is impossible to predict, but judging from the past it may in 1900 be considered that the peculiar people who lived in our day were not the most in error for holding the maxim—

Comment.
Peculiar Peo-
ple.

“The wise for health on exercise depend,

“God never made his work for man to mend.”

* Niemeyer on the *Systematic Treatment of Cholera*, translated by P. W. Latham, p. 35 of edit. of 1872.

† *Brit. Med. Jour.*, Oct. 10, 1874.

‡ *Brit. Med. Jour.*, Oct. 31, 1874; and *Practitioner*, July, 1875, p. 6.

Westminster
Review.

It was said of George the Third:—

George the
Third.

“The king employs three doctors daily,
“Willis, Heberden, and Baylie,
“All three uncommon skilful men,
“Baylie, Willis, Heberden;
“But doubtful which most sure to kill is
“Baylie, Heberden, or Willis.”

It is now agreed that nothing could have been more injurious than the brutal treatment to which that unhappy monarch was subjected.

The Chaldee physicians were far more philosophical in their treatment of the equally afflicted Nebuchadnezzar—and it is highly probable that the Egyptians in the time of Moses were more successful in the treatment of diseases of the lungs than we are at the present time.

Small-Pox.
Tweedy.

Gregory.

In Tweedy's Library of Medicine and Article Small-Pox, the late Dr. George Gregory remarks:—“It is a
“melancholy reflection, that for many hundred years
“the interference of the physician, often thwarting but
“seldom aiding the efforts of nature, was calculated, to

“diminish rather than increase the chance of the patients’
“recovery.”

Westminster
Review.

Since this was written, the Newspaper’s report that a poor fellow (Morby) was prosecuted for allowing his child to die of Small-pox without medical advice.

Daily News,
28th March,
1882.

Had he been learned in the history of Medicine he might have asked the Judge—Was it my duty to have called in the late Dr. Mackintosh who bled his patients to a pint, or the late Dr. J. Hamilton who ordered a bottle of Port, or Dr. Armstrong who plunged them into a cold bath, or of Dr. Clark, of Newcastle, with his almost boiling bath, or the late Dr. Currie to give him ice, or Dr. James hot slops. Might I have called in that famous physician Broussais, who treated fever patients with gum water and free ventilation, and declared all other treatment to be injurious.

Small-Pox.

On the treatment of Smallpox, a modern writer, Dr. Alex. Ogston, remarks:—“In the milder cases, suitable
“food and a moderate supply of stimulants were the
“only treatment employed; in the severer cases, on the
“other hand, stimulants sometimes in enormous quanti-
“ties were used and with the best results. With the
“view of curing the disease itself only two remedies

Ogston.

Westminster
Review.

“were tried, viz., xylol and vaccine lymph, and each
“proved useless.*

As in the temperance Hospital, all stimulants are decided to be injurious, the only medicament to which no objection is raised by any great authority “is that of
“Dr. Luton of Rheims who treated Typhoid with an
“absolute water diet”† *i.e.* neither food nor physic.

Small-pox.

Morby’s treatment of his son was probably very similar only he paid no fee for the precept.‡

Poor Morby might have quoted the example of Voltaire who requested nothing from his physicians but to be left to nature and not to be hurried in his departure.

But being a poor, ignorant man he merely urged his

* *Brit. and For. Med. Chir. Rev.* Jan. 1873, p. 188.

† *The Doctor*, Feb. 1874, p. 22.

‡ An old French proverb is quoted by Sir Gilbert Blane in his *Elements of Medical Logic*, “that the difference is very great between a good and bad physician, but between a good physician and none at all, the difference is but very small.”

want of faith in Doctors and his reliance on a Superior Power.

Westminster
Review.

Whereupon he was abused like a pickpocket, treated as a felon and found guilty of manslaughter.

“They manage these things better in France.”

USES OF GANGLIONS AND PLEXUS.

Perhaps it may be allowable in this place to protest against the attribution to Dr. Lionel Beale of an old doctrine adduced by Dr. *Monro secundus* in 1780 and taught yearly in his lectures by Dr. *Monro tertius* from 1800 to 1840. Dr. John Drysdale in his *Protoplastic Theory of Life* p. 115 says:—“The effect of the frequent crossing “and interlacing and change of course of the nerve “fibres, Dr. Beale pointed out is to prevent the complete “paralysis of either motion or sensation of any part by “injuries of a moderate number of nerve fibres.”

Beale.

Dr. Monro,
2^{dus}.

Dr. Monro secundus demonstrated the anatomy of the Ganglia and showed in his magnificent work *Observations on the Nervous System*. in 1783* that the nerves proceeding from a ganglion contain strands from every nerve that entered.

Yet there were no anastomoses, but that the fibres of each nerve continued without break or mixture to the brain.†

Their energy is derived from the brain and is not communicated from one to another.

This arrangement was of great advantage because it was of less consequence for a whole organ, to lose one thirtieth part of its nervous influence, than for one thirtieth part of the organ to lose the whole and thus become gangrenous, or affected with paralysis.

* A beautiful copy of this book in folio is in the King's Library in the British Museum.

† *Observations on the Nervous System* by Dr. Monro, 2^{dus}, Chap. 19, p. 55 of folio edition of 1783.

REVIEW OF DUBLIN JOURNAL OF MEDICAL SCIENCE.

This Review may be worth answering as the Editor appears to conduct his Journal on the principle of impartiality and independence and he does not “degenerate into a system of general laudation which deprives so many Reviews of all interest and authority.”*

Dublin Med.
Journal.

The Reviewer commences as follows:—“*The Simplicity of Life*, by Ralph Richardson, M.D., London, 1873. Now we are at a loss in reading this book, to know how much of it has been written by Dr. Richardson and how much by Dr. Fletcher. It commences with fourteen pages headed ‘Essay on the Simplicity of Life,’ which is taken up chiefly with criticisms on

* John Forbes, M.D., *Postscripts to the Brit. and For. Med. Jour.*, Sept., 1837.

Dublin Med.
Journal.

“the vague way in which words are used by Huxley, Gull, Beale, and Mayer; this we suppose is by Dr. Richardson. Then follow forty-eight pages headed “from ‘Rudiments of Physiology by John Fletcher,’ 1837.”

The Reviewer then quotes pages 5, 6, and 7, describing the three theories of Life and the definitions of Property, Power, and Action.

“According to Dr. Fletcher, organism or structure and life, stand to each other in the relation indirectly of cause and effect. Organism gives rise to the development of a property called irritability or vitality which when acted on by certain stimuli (powers), generally in more or less constant operation, produce those actions, in the sum of which life consists.”

“This view is, as Dr. Fletcher says, not that which has been generally held. By most writers life and living action have not been looked on as identical, but life has been considered as a substantial principle, on which depend both organization and vital action.”

“The arguments in favor of the existence of a vital principle, or of life as a substance, are according to Dr. Fletcher, chiefly three, viz.—The impossibility of ex-

“plaining without such an hypothesis either:—1. The
 “original organization of a living being. 2. Its charac-
 “teristic actions when organized. 3. The incompatibility
 “of the opposite opinion with a belief in a future state
 “of existence.”

“Each of these arguments is considered in the text,
 “and in a foot note Dr. Fletcher displays great research
 “among the writings of the early philosophers on the
 “nature of life. The opinions thus brought together do
 “not appear to us to be of much scientific interest, al-
 “though they are just as valuable as most of the more
 “recent speculations on the same subject.”*

The Reviewer then proceeds. “In answer to the first
 “argument it is admitted ‘that the chemical composition
 “of organized tissues is quite distinct from inorganized
 “compounds’ (this would hardly be admitted now) and

* This long note of Fletcher’s, giving the opinions of early
 writers is interesting to all lovers of the literature of the profession,
 and displays the gradual progress of mankind in physiological
 knowledge, but as it does not prove any point advocated in this
 treatise, it is in this edition relegated to the Appendix.

Comment.

Dublin Med.
Journal.

“consequently the first step toward organism must require powers different from those by which inorganicized matters are formed. It requires Life but not a Living Principle. It requires the Life or living action ($\zeta\acute{\omega}\eta$), of the thing organizing; not any living principle ($\psi\acute{\upsilon}\chi\eta$) in the thing to be organized. In other words every living thing is derived from some pre-existing living thing. The organization then of the embryo; or the process by which a new being is formed, possessed of organs however rude, and in virtue of its organism endued with irritability or vitality is the work of the parent. The question of course arises, whence the organization of the first parent? With this problem the physiologist in the strict sense of the word, has nothing whatever to do. The Almighty Creator, the first and the last, willed that not only the inorganic, but the organic kingdom of nature should exist; but how either the one or the other was originally called into being, He alone knows who said:—‘Let there be light and there was light.’” The Reviewer remarks upon this. “This is eminently satisfactory to the enquiring mind, who begins to ask why the book is called the Simplicity of Life.”

The Reviewer next alludes to Fletcher's arguments from the analogy between the phenomena of life and those of chemical and mechanical action at page 63 of of this edition and remarks thereon:—" This is all very " true, but again we ask were is the Simplicity of Life ? " For it appears that not only is life as deep a mystery " as even Dr. Beale would have it, but that everything " else, too, is a mystery."

Dublin Med.
Journal.

The Reviewer is more smart than reasonable in expecting the physiologist to explain why and how animated creatures appeared upon the earth.

Comment.

No one before Mr. Darwin junior and Prof. Huxley has attempted to explain why, wherefore and how organized beings came into existence or in other words the mechanism of creation, and how far they have succeeded I leave their readers to determine..

Physiology relates only to the nature and actions of organized beings, as Astronomy treats of the motion and mutual relations of the heavenly bodies, but their origin or reason for their existence is no part of that science. If the physiologist can refer all the motions of living beings in health and disease to laws as clear and simple as those which are considered to explain the

Comment.

Dublin Med.
Journal.

motions of the heavenly bodies he may be allowed to have arrived at all the Simplicity, of which, (from the nature of the case) a natural science is capable.

Comment.

This last remark of the the Reviewer that “not only “life but every thing else too, is a mystery” is devoid of all argument, Mystery and Simplicity are comparative terms.

The only explanation ever afforded in any science is to refer a new or puzzling fact to a series of facts which are more familiar and better understood.

If the Reviewer grants that the laws of Life, of Chemical Action, and of Gravitation, have been shown to be equally mysterious, he must concede that they are equally simple, and that the author has proved his former title “the simplicity of life” to be sufficiently appropriate.

The Reviewer continues. “With regard to the third “argument the author maintains that our disbelief in “the supposed principle of life is no reason we should “doubt the real principle of immortality; but it appears “to us that the grounds for admitting one are about as “strong as those on which we believe the other. Science “tells us nothing of either, and Revelation affirms “both.”

This making Revelation a supplement to Science is even more ridiculous than Prof. Huxley's disparagement of revelation because it does not approve itself to his understanding. The existence or non-existence of a Vital Principle, or Force must be determined solely by science. No one with a moderate knowledge of Greek would assert that "revelation asserts both" but into this argument, it is needless to enter, as this treatise has no bearing, direct or indirect upon religion.*

The Reviewer then continues. "Having shown that "there is no evidence in support of the existence of a "vital principle, Dr. Fletcher, very logically, thinks it "unnecessary to enquire whether such an entity is adequate to effect all that has been ascribed to it."

* "We agree therefore with Dr. Boerhaave that when a medical "problem is prosecuted so far as to be carried to circumstances "depending upon the connection between soul and body it may "be considered solved for all the purposes of physic"

Lectures on Materia Medica by William Cullen, p. 5 of Edit. 1773.

Dublin Med.
Journal.

“The following quotation contains the gist of the
“the theory, and shows what the author believes to be
“the connection between Physiology and Pathology.”

The Reviewer then quotes pages, 101 and 102.

Meyer.

The Reviewer next takes up the cudgels for Meyer.

“Dr. Richardson disbelieves altogether in the appli-
“cability of the theory of the equivalence of force to
“explain the properties, powers and actions of living
“beings; maintains that it is only by a confusion in the
“use of words that the theory is made to apply to the
“action of organized creatures.”

“We must say that it appears to us that his criticisms
“on Meyers’s work are the merest verbal quibbles, most
“of which show that he has failed to grasp the true
“meaning of the Conservation of Energy. He himself
“does not explain whence the force so abundantly mani-
“fested in the living body is derived.”

Comment.

Tait.

It is needless to answer these criticisms at the present time. Prof. Tait of Edinburgh in his work “Recent
“Advances in Physical Science,” has so completely demolished Meyer’s doctrines that the last chapter of the Nature of Life might have been omitted. Prof. Tait shows that force has no independent existence and there-

fore, there can be no more reason to account for its abundant “manifestation in the living body” than for the influence of the equally mythical ghost the Principle of life.

Dublin Med.
Journal.

Comment.

The Reviewer will perceive on a little reflection that bodies living or dead manifest neither powers nor properties but only actions, the properties and powers are mere inferences of the mind just as the terms, cause and effect.

“The powers that act on the living body and cause “it to manifest actions so abundantly,” are the same as those which act on every portion of the globe, its materials and inhabitants.

The correlatives to these powers are in living beings, the peculiar susceptibilities of each portion of their frames, and, the actions resulting are proportioned to the energy of the powers, and the susceptibility of the organized body ;* just as the vigour of combustion is in

* This susceptibility called irritability, by Glisson ; and the Spirit of Animation possessed by all Organic tissue, by Erasmus Darwin in his Zoonomia.

Dublin Med.
Journal.

proportion to the energy of the supporter of combustion and the combustibility of the burning body.

Comment.

The Reviewer might as reasonably complain that the Chemist does not explain whence is derived the force so abundantly displayed in a burning body, or that the Astronomer does not explain whence proceeds the force so abundantly manifested in the planetary revolutions.

Reviewer.

The Reviewer then continues—"In conclusion we "have the astonishing assertion that heat and electricity "are not objects, that they are not indestructable, that "they are not endued with properties of any kind, and "that they have not the power of taking on different "forms, but that they are nevertheless able to excite "and cure diseases."

Comment.

If the Reviewer had defined the word "objects" it would have been more easy to answer his objection. At page 414 of the same number the Reviewer gives great credit to Mr. Wilson for the collection of "*objects*" for a dermatological museum. Would he class with them Light, Heat, Electricity, Sympathy, and Passion? It is simply confusing to style a material substance, its properties, its powers and its conditions by the same word.

Even if by a stretch of language Light, Heat, and

Electricity might be called objects of contemplation, yet their absence can hardly be so termed—e.g. Darkness, Cold, Privation of food or of air or of exercise, also general or local depletion, all of which are common exciting causes of disease, if we may rely upon the ordinary observations of mankind.

Dublin Med.
Journal.

Comment.

Referring to the list of imponderables as causes of diseases, the Reviewer remarks,—“We think that in many of the cases given, the evidence of causation or cure by the supposed agent would, on examination be found defective.”

This objection would apply equally to any collection of pathological reports.* A theorist must take his facts

Comment.

* This objection of the Reviewer to the collection of authorities was anticipated by the illustrious Morgani; he says in his Preface—“In collecting observations and speaking from opinions only, notwithstanding that I make probability my guide, some one may retort upon me, ‘Dixit mendacia multa, dicens veris similia,’” p. 25 of the Preface to *Seats and Causes of Diseases*, by John Baptist Morgani, translated by Dr. Ben. Alexander, 1769.

Morgani.

Dublin Med.
Journal.

as he finds them, they are not like experiments which may be repeated until their correctness be ascertained :

“I know not how the truth may be,
“But tell the tale as told to me.”

If such observations are reported by trustworthy men, and without any expectation that they will be used for a special purpose, and also in such numbers as mutually to corroborate each other, they may be accepted as generally correct, whether the theory deduced from them be received or rejected.

The Reviewer concludes with the remark,—“From
“the poetical quotation with which the book terminates,
“we conclude that the author writes not for this genera-
“but for posterity. To posterity we are happy to
“leave the responsibility of forming a judgement of his
“work.”

Comment.

Little did this Critic dream that before five years had flown, the far famed Virchow would endorse, the doctrines adduced by the author. In his address to the Medical Congress he asserts that “irritability and vitality are
“nearly identical” also “that Life is a collective func-

Virchow.

“tional action of all parts of the higher or vital (parts of
 “the body) as well as of the lower and less important; and
 “that there is no one seat of life but that every true ele-
 “mentary part, especially every cell, is a seat of life, and
 “hence disease and life, or to speak more accurately,
 “diseased and healthy life, can very well co-exist in the
 “same organism; always however, so that disease signi-
 “fies a reduction, a *minus** of healthy life.†”

Dublin Med.
Journal.

Virchow.

Virchow might fairly have confessed his obligations to poor John Brown and echoed his axiom that “Health and Disease are similar states differing only in degree,” and that “disease consists of diminished local excitement”‡

* Italics in original.

† *British Medical Journal*, 6th August, 1881, p. 202.

‡ *Elements of Medicine*, chap. ii., part 39, edition 1778.

Brit. and For.
Med. Chir.
Review.

The British and Foreign Medico Chirurgical Review for July 1875, at page 174 paid this work the compliment of a review and should the same critic look into this second edition, he will find many of the faults of the former corrected.

From the Reviewer's stand point he is very complimentary, yet it may be hoped, he will not consider the author querulous in showing that something may still be said for his method of treating the acknowledged facts upon which rests the science of Life. The Reviewer remarks:—"At the present time we do not
"want Dominie Sampson; there have for ages been
"sadly too many of this class. What we really require
"are earnest and simple-minded men, who are willing
"to undergo the necessary training, to be able to study
"nature and her works to advantage, to be able to

“observe her operations, and to record them in language,
 “if not logically correct, at least capable of being under-
 “stood by others working in the same direction. The
 “science of so-called metaphysics, equally with logic,
 “was never a science of truth. Any question raised by
 “the one or the other can be argued efficiently from
 “two distinct sides, the one equally as plausible as the
 “other. But fireside scientists, fireside metaphysicians,
 “and logicians, are babes feeding on milk, in compari-
 “son with the bold adventurers into the unknown paths
 “of biology.

Brit. and For.
 Med. Chir.
 Review.

“The same amount of time judiciously spent in actual
 “observation would have placed the author of the book
 “in question in the foremost rank of original observers.
 “But we must say that both (these authors) have much
 “to learn and much to do before their names will be
 “handed down to posterity on terms similar to the
 “names of the two or three men whom they criticise.”

Would the learned Reviewer banish Locke and
 Dugald Stewart from the educational lists of books?
 would he shut up Aldrich and Whately?

Comment.

Does he consider the lives of Euclid, Aristotle and
 Plato have been useless to mankind?

Brit. and For.
Med. Chir.
Review.

Generalization is as needful to a science as a mere record of facts—and Generalization implies induction.

There could hardly be a better example in point than this Reviewer's assertion a few lines in advance of this criticism where he says :—" The more it is investigated "the more forcibly does the TRUTH dawn upon us, that "man and everything in nature has had a common "origin."

Comment.

Will the Reviewer descend from generalities and simply tell us from what species of Ape, man can possibly have descended ?

Can he show any one species of the simiadæ which has each organ, more similar to man than some other species confessedly inferior ? Is it not mere "fireside argument" to assert that there must be some lost species to bridge over the chasm ?

Comment.

Every man arranges the facts he meets with in his practice in some method or other, his human nature compels him to generalize. The truth and consistency of such generalization is the only question. Practical men who verbally disclaim theory, make assertions implying hypotheses, the most abtruse and

incomprehensible.* It is not a question then of maintaining or of discarding theory; but of holding such as shall be reasonable and systematic, or on the other hand unintelligent and unintelligible. But, if it be granted that experimentalists are the more useful men, is that any reason why they should not employ technical terms in a correct and uniform manner?

Brit. and For.
Med. Chir.
Review.

Whether the names of “fireside scientists be handed “down to posterity” is of little moment, but that clear and correct ideas should prevail in pathology is a matter affecting the health and happiness of mankind.

Comment.

Dr. Wm. Heberden at any rate had a better opinion of fireside logicians, he remarks:—“The art of healing “has scarcely hitherto, had any guide, but the slow one “of experience, and, as yet, has made no illustrious “advances by the help of reason; nor will it probably “make any, till Providence think fit to bless mankind “by sending into the world some superior genius capable of contemplating the animated world with the

Heberden.

* See note 13, *Nature of Life*.

Brit. and For.
Med. Chir.
Review.

“sagacity shown by Newton in the inanimate, and of
“discovering that great principle of life, upon which its
“existence depends, and by which all its functions are
governed and directed.*

Had the late Dr. John Fletcher, lived to finish his work, he would have done for Physiology what Newton did for Astronomy, and it is with the hope of drawing attention to the Rudiments of his theory that the Nature of Life was published.

Reviewers.

In bidding farewell to the Reviewers the author feels constrained to acknowledge their kindly and lengthened notices of his first edition, but at this distance of time, he can but regret their neglect of his second—which if only from its neat binding, good paper and excellent printing was worthy of their recognition.

Drysdale.

Since my first edition, Dr. John Drysdale has brought out his “*Protoplastic Theory of Life*,” which contains the substance of this treatise, and additional material bearing on these doctrines.

* *Commentaries*, p. 483, edition of 1803.

After the appearance of this work my second edition may seem an impertinence, but I was induced to issue it; if for no other reason than to correct some of the many defects of the first.

The author cannot conclude without thanking the very respected publisher for his care with the printing, and in arranging so clearly the various divisions of the "*Nature of Life.*"

"Fear not the anger of the wise to raise,

"Those best can bear reproof who merit praise."

R. R.

10 ROLAND GARDENS, S.W.

July, 1882.

